

The Republican.

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TO THE DISCOMFITED RADICAL REFORMERS OF THE KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Dorchester Gaol, May 12, 1824.

"MY BELOVED FELLOW COUNTRYMEN, AND
DEARLY BELOVED COUNTRYWOMEN!"

Do not mistake: read *Dorchester*, not *Ilchester*, Gaol.

"*Oi, a zee tiz Dorchistir; ain s'pose, that veller, Carlile, oo wants ta chait uz ov oir God, 'sthere et.*"

Aye! here I am! But where are you? Are you dead, or do you sleep, you, who were of late such ripping, ranting, rising, Radicals? If yours be not the *last sleep*, arouse, whilst I speak to you: open your eyes and read what I am about to write to you: listen to what I say: hear, for I will speak: see—read, for I will write: hearken, and attend, for I will counsel you.

"Nay, now, Mr. Carlile, this is too bad; you ought to let us be quiet, now we are quiet; let us dream quietly, at least, about Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage, with King, Lords, and Commons; about the Constitution, and the God that was a Radical Reformer! we have had enough, even to surfeiting, of orators, writers, and delegates; of Saxton, Mr. Hunt, the Black Dwarf, and the Radical Tailor! of plans and plots, of insurrections, conquering schemes, inventions and roasted corn: our heads and stomachs are more empty than ever! and our pockets hardly fit to meet Mr. Hunt's FOURPENNY! to say nothing of what we owe for Radical Processions, Radical Dinners, Radical Suppers, and Radical Drink! it is really too bad, Mr. Carlile, so to disturb us now; for we do not get the best of sleep after drinking Mr. Hunt's fourpenny without sugar! the sour belchings, the gripes, the flatulences are bad enough, God knows it and won't help, without your beginning to disturb and torment us."

I cannot give you the quarter asked; the right school for

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reform is at length opened, and, if you will not come voluntarily, you must be brought to it. Here is nothing, or next to nothing, to pay, a hundred of you may read one "Republican" and "Moralist;" nay, five hundred, if you take care of the paper; therefore, I do not ask a farthing in each week for all the instruction I am prepared to give: and you may be assured, as a beginning, that I shall neither recommend processions, dinners, suppers, drink, nor public meetings of any kind: not an hour of your time, that should be devoted to labour, do I desire to waste; not a penny of your earnings; and yet, I engage to put you into the right road to bring about a reform, radically good.

The cry of "Radical Reform," upon the principles and pretensions put forth within the last seven years, is evidently extinct. As a sect or party, the "Radicals" are down, put down, and the cause of this is a matter of fair and useful enquiry. I attribute it entirely to the unsoundness of their principles, to a want of sufficient honesty and good sense to avow publicly that which they privately purposed and desired. This delinquency in principle and action encouraged hollow and immoral men to thrust themselves forward as directors; and acting under the direction of such men, accelerated that overthrow which was as signal as it was desirable. Nothing was meant that was talked about: nothing was talked about that was meant. The inhabitants of one district were assured, that the inhabitants of another were about to assemble in arms; and so, on the other hand; so that, each were continually waiting for the other, whilst neither intended, nor were they prepared for, any thing of the kind. The murders at Derby and in Scotland, and the transportations at York, all grew out of treacherous delusions of this kind; and the men sacrificed were sure to be from among the best. But happily, "Radical Reform," under the particular pretensions which have been connected with these words, is extinct, and it will not require a very large *attic story* to form an *archive* for the preservation of the "Radical Records!"

Reform of Parliament has been a matter of clamour almost ever since Parliaments were first formed; and Parliaments that are constituted under the influence of a King, aristocracy, and priesthood, will always require a democratical reformation. So long as such Parliaments exist; the cry of reform will be continually raising, at intervals, for the future, as it has been constantly during the past. The evil does not lie in the Parliament; but, *in the influence that consti-*

tutes such a Parliament. That influence will never be voluntarily yielded: IT MUST BE CONQUERED BY SUPERIOR INFLUENCE: of which, there are but two sorts, that of physical and that of moral power;—that of an appeal to arms and physical strength, or that of progressing knowledge. In former times, amidst general ignorance, no grievance was to be remedied but by an appeal to arms or physical strength; but, in the present day, we have gained an advantage, an ally, and general knowledge is beginning to supersede the use of an appeal to arms or any kind of physical strength. For instance, if I can go on, as I hope to do, to convince the whole people of this country, that their religion is an error; that it has no foundation but in fiction; that history overthrows all its pretensions, by proving that Jesus Christ is a fictitious character and never had existence; and that the Jews never were such a people as the first fourteen books of the Bible describe them; then the church will fall without the application of mechanical power to it, without the aid of any other battering ram than the Printing Press.

One of the main causes of the failure of every effort to bring about the necessary reform has been, that those who profess to work at it have proceeded upon the principle of secret associations, or associations that avowed a purpose different to that which was really meant. This has opened a field for spies and bad men to be the most active in such associations; and thus, nothing but disgrace and suffering have befallen men who were well-disposed; until sickened with disappointment, they have retired into silence and privacy with disgust. My recommendation is, that no kind of private associations should exist; and had I the influence, I would abolish every pot house club, and the pot houses with them.

Associations for honest and useful purposes require no privacy, and can never proceed well upon such grounds. When well meant, to bring about any public purpose, an association of any given number of individuals short of the whole community is, that community seen and acting in miniature. It is no more necessary, that there should be secrecy in such a proceeding, than, that, a community should make all its proceedings as secret as possible. Secrecy, on any scale, can never be found in action with honesty; because, honesty prefers to be seen in all its movements. Even when persecution rages, it is better to oppose it openly; for, if every man and woman spoke out freely what they thought upon the matter; the force of opinion would the sooner stay

that persecution: whilst secret associations may go on for an age, secretly applauding and encouraging the persecuted, without working any abatement of the persecution. The rule for each person's action is, not to do or say any thing that is not morally defensible; but to do and say every thing that is morally defensible.

Within my time, the cry about "Luddism" and "Radical Reform" has done great mischief to many individuals, great mischief to the community as a whole, without a spark of good in any shape to any person; and all the evil has arisen from proceeding to the redress of grievances upon a wrong principle, or upon the principle of private association. The Spa Fields Riot and the hanging of Cashman grew out of the Spencean Association. The Blanketteer Meeting and the Manchester Massacre Meeting grew out of the private associations in Manchester and its vicinity. Matters were talked over by individuals, not, perhaps, as a general understanding, in these associations, which were communicated to the government by their spies, likely, by the very persons who broached them, as the general purpose of the association: and, on such communications, the government acted; whilst the Reformers were avowedly, in public, acting upon propositions which never appeared to call for the severity and oppression and military interference which were constantly heaped upon them: and which, the major part of them did not expect, because they must have felt that they had done nothing to call for it. Their error lay in the private association; in the committees and delegates, which opened a channel for all sorts of idle and false reports, and which formed an excuse for all the measures adopted in pretended counteraction by the government: in fact, the body of the people never rightly knew what these committees and delegates were doing; the privacy of proceeding prevented any thing like public disclosure and all has ended in mischief.

Few men have said more or stronger things in private than I have said in public; but the public saying on paper disarms all misrepresentation and baffles all intrigue. It stands monumentally for reference on all occasions. Had I been disposed to say and act upon that in private only, which I have said and acted upon in public, my meaning and purpose would have been aggravated; and it is probable, that I should have gone the way of all flesh long ago. In seeking to overthrow a tyranny, there is more danger, and less good to be done, in private than in public proceedings. An

outcry was raised among you, Radicals, which I could hear vibrating from Ilchester Gaol to Hull, and through elliptical lines—"WE WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH CARLILE!" I saw the bearing of all your actions, and had no desire to have any thing to do with you, until you could see the folly of your then passing conduct and improve by it. Now that you must have seen the worthlessness of many men whom you then cherished, who were vipers in your bosoms, and clamourously hissing at me; now that you cannot fail to have seen the folly of your seven years past conduct: now that all your projects have failed; your Radical Union, your Patriotic Union, your Northern Union, your Knights of the order of Saint Henry of Ilchester; now that all your mischievous nonsense has failed to produce any thing but mischief; I am prepared to have something to say and to do with you, whether you will or not. I will develope to you the right means by which your desired reform is to be obtained, and bring you into the right road to that journey's end.

In your past movements, efforts were made, by individuals, to collect large bodies of the people, with a hope, that, when so collected, they would proceed to what is termed *insurrection*. I confess, that I was led away, by false reports of armed preparations, to believe that an overthrow of every thing wrong in the country was about to be accomplished by that means; but I have since learnt, that no such preparations were made, or to no such extent as was currently reported, and as currently believed: and this knowledge has finished my conviction, that nothing was well meant by the major part of those who were looked upon as leaders and directors; or, if well meant, they had not knowledge enough to know what they were doing, and how their doings would end: they could not know the enemy with which they had to contend; a knowledge, which is, in all cases, essential to success, with a powerful enemy. We heard an open respect avowed for the King, the Constitution, the Church, the House of Lords, and all those very things, to remove or change which was essential to success! We heard a clamour about Reform without Revolution! which meant *nothing*! for there can be no reform without revolution. *Revolution* is *reform* in matters of government, if the word has any application to such matters: but the truth is, that mankind are always more seriously frightened at unmeaning words than at actual circumstances. I have known Radicals, your first rate Radicals, to be continually, in public,

affecting to approve the form of government, to be crying out for King, House of Lords, Church, Constitution as by law established, and all such nonsense, whilst, in private, they would avow the most determined enmity, even malignity, towards the whole. Now, for my part, though an avowed Republican, though I desire to see the Church abolished as an evil, the House of Lords abolished as an evil, and a King elected with a salary of five thousand a year, instead of a civil list of a million and as much more by way of perquisite as he pleases; though I desire these things, I feel none of that personal hostility and malignity towards the Royal Family, the Lords, and the Priests, as I uniformly found to be the private feeling among the "Radicals" with whom I have associated. What I desire to get rid of is, a *permanent evil*, and not the momentary instruments of that evil. I wish to reform the King, Lords, Commons, and Priests, and to make them better men than they are at present, more useful, and less expensive, as public men, as far as we want them. I had rather see the King trafficking as a merchant, a manufacturer, or an agriculturist, than see him trafficking in bribes, sinecures, pensions, titles, paltry pieces of ribband and garters, the virtue of different women, and other such paltry and immoral traffickings. I had rather see him so situated and disposed as to command respect from all, than that he should incur the hatred of one good man or woman: and under this feeling, I feel that I am one of his best friends, *not his subject*. I desire to make him a happy man, which, I am sure, he cannot be at present. It is not for himself that he now fills the office of King; it is not for the people as a whole that he acts; but for what Churchill called—"a damned aristocracy." Every single aristocrat is as injurious to the country as the office of King in its present state. The King being the source of all titles, sinecures, pensions, and promotions, can be looked upon only as the mere creature of the aristocracy, who crave all these profits at the expense of the industrious multitude. Some creature for distribution they must have; they set up a King; and then they strive to outvie each other in drawing the produce of industry through this "fountain of honour!" as they call it! This is one of the things that you must reform, Radicals, before you can reform the Parliament. We shall do it all, cry you, if we can reform the Parliament: yes, but you cannot reform the parliament, until you reform those who influence and constitute the parliament. Parliamentary Reform, upon the principle upon which it has hitherto been clamoured for, is a complete delusion. We had

better hear no more of it, and earnestly set to work in the right course of proceeding. To shew you which is that course, I will proceed.

I commence with a few plain truths, which all men do not understand until they have been-laid before them and considered.

First, that all men, whether crowned and throned as kings, coroneted and robed as Lords,—mitred, hatted and surpliced as Priests, or smock-frocked and aproned as labourers, are animals of the same species. Strip them naked, and wash them clean, and you will not know a King from a Blacksmith, a Lord from a Drover, nor a Priest from a Chimney Sweeper. We attach too much consideration to men in consequence of their dress and office. In all men, there is a fundamentally similar principle, they have like passions, and all move in their different orbits, as much upon the same stimulus, as the different planets move in their orbits: though, with men, as with the planets, there is not the same difference in magnitude: and politically and morally speaking, all are, or should be, equal and free, each to do the best he can for himself, without doing an injury to another.

The right way to proceed in considering a state of society is, to consider all its members in a state of nakedness, as another horde of animals, but qualified to proceed in building houses, cultivating the land for superior food, and in dressing and embellishing themselves and all about them. Such must have been the original state of society, and such is the state of millions of human beings to this day. Man, in his natural state, is nothing more than any other animal, and this is a consideration of which he should never lose sight: for this is an incontrovertible reason why he should not suffer from unequal and unnatural distinctions in society: why he should not labour to support another in idleness. Beginning as a horde of human beings, in a state of nature, unclothed, unhoused, unprovided with food, is it reasonable to think, that they would set up one as a king, some hundreds as aristocrats, and hundreds more as priests? Is it reasonable to think, that the multitude would set to and labour to provide superior dress, superior houses, and superior food, for one tenth of their number, and allow that tenth to be idle, insolent, extravagant, wasteful, and tyrannical? Would not the common sense even of a horse in such a state say—"work and provide for yourselves, or remain naked, cold, and hungry?" Since, then, no man, no animal, in its natural state would consent to its own degradation, does it not follow, that Kings, Aristocrats, and Priests, have ob-

tained their powers and distinctions by some species of conquest or cunning, and that the mass of mankind, in such a state of society, are as much tamed, servile, and senseless animals, as the horse, the ass, or any useful animal to man? Such is the true inference of the present state of society; and man, instead of being the most noble and most rational of animals, as he is by nature qualified to be, is as tame and servile as the basest and most corrupted. The majority are in a state of servitude to the minority, and if they do not rightly proceed to extricate themselves from that state, they deserve it. The progress of knowledge affords to every man the means to educate himself, and it is by education alone that the majority can be brought out of a state of servitude to the minority. It is education alone, that now makes the difference. But as yesterday I was a journeyman mechanic, subject to many little oppressions; to day, I feel, that I am the equal of, and independent of, every man in the world. Education alone has made this change; for, I am neither better clothed, nor better fed, than I was *occasionally* as a journeyman mechanic, and possess but little more of what is called property.

Second, the same may be said of women, as of men; and the old proverb, that *Joan in the dark is as good as my Lady*, explains all that I can say upon the subject. Dress and education make all the exterior difference. Some of the poor female bipeds are ignorant enough to talk about poor clay and rich clay, high blood and low blood; there is a deal of such nonsense prated in this country; but a good healthy country wench, for the propagation and improvement of the species, is worth a hundred of your fine ladies, diseased by bad habits, and corrupted with spleen and foul vapour from the perversions and suppressions of their natural passions.

Third, since nature has not furnished mankind with Kings, Lords, and Priests, it follows, that their existence must be the result of good policy in the whole, or of trick in a few of the more cunning and powerful. The palpable mischief of the thing scouts all idea of considering it a good policy; because, the majority every where suffer from it. Where you see a rich and powerful aristocracy and priesthood, you are sure to find a poor people: the richness of the former is an evidence that too much is extracted from the labour of the latter. This is evident both in England and in Ireland, at this moment, and throughout the history of each country. If those accumulate much property, who do not

produce, those, who do produce must suffer by that undue accumulation. In Ireland, we see a rich church and a discontented starving people: and the poverty of the one is exactly in ratio with the extracted wealth of the other. The same is nearly the case with the people and Church of England. Were there no church, no aristocracy, in England and Ireland, the inhabitants would soon become a wealthy race: in short, we should found a sort of general aristocracy in expenditure upon industry, and not in idleness supported by extortions from industry. Neither King, aristocracy, nor church, produce the slightest advantage to the commerce and industry of the country; for, it is a clear principle, that one man can consume as much as another man, if he has it to consume, and that a man who is a Priest to day with £500. a year, would consume just as much of the produce of industry, if he were deprived of his priesthood, and stimulated to earn £500. a year by some useful industry. The consumption of the aristocracy and priesthood is no benefit to the labouring man in the aggregate; because, the price of that consumption is a value injuriously extracted from the capital of the country in the first place: it is therefore a clear injury to every labouring man as sure as all benefit by an accumulation of capital throughout the country. The consumption generated upon the strength of useful production, is the consumption that benefits the country, and we have a good specimen of what that consumption would be, without an idle aristocracy and priesthood in the expenditure and modes of living adopted by some of our thriving merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturists. So it is clear, that trick, injurious trick, is the cause of your servitude to a worthless aristocracy and Priesthood, and not any kind of good policy.

Some person, or persons, in the shape of an executive to the Government, we must have; therefore, I shall say nothing here about dispensing with the office of King: to dispense with all unnecessary expence is all that we can desire. I would give such an officer only such a salary as should put him upon a footing, in domestic comforts, with the most wealthy of our merchants or manufacturers. That would be making him a useful public character. Now, we spoil our Kings: at least, the aristocracy and priesthood spoil them for us. They all league against us; and produce what we will, they extract enough to keep the poor still poor; as if it were a crime in society, that the majority should possess all the necessaries of life and live without murmuring.

Having shewn, that an aristocracy and priesthood do not benefit the community, in the way of expenditure or consumption, we will enquire, if they benefit us by any other means? Are they necessary to legislation, or to magistracy? The ignorance and bad feeling which are uniformly displayed by our hereditary legislators on matters which all other people can see to be beneficial to the country, form a proof, that they are not the most competent legislators. There is scarcely an academy in the country but contains more intellect than is contained in our House of Lords: and not only an academy, but the same may be truly said of a manufactory that employs a hundred men. To be a competent legislator, a man should have a sort of general knowledge of the commerce, manufactures, and agriculture of the country, together with the advanced and advancing state of the arts and sciences; and these are matters not to be learned out of Roman, Greek, or Jew Books, which make up the sum of a Lord's education. From those books, there is nothing useful to be learned; and a man, who has no other learning to boast of, may be considered in a state of disqualification for legislation or the magistracy. The best Magistrates, as well as the best legislators, will always arise from popular elections. They can have no other just source. Our priests are excluded from legislation and selected as magistrates, but whether they make the best magistrates, let the records of the country speak. A magistrate should be a man of an enlarged mind, which is a species of hostility to every priest, and every kind of priestcraft. It is thus, that we find so many low and contemptible tricks practised by our Clerical Justices.

It is an offence to the understanding of the reader to enlarge upon a subject that is well understood; and feeling assured, that the real worth of the aristocracy of this and every country in Europe is well understood, I shall dismiss them from a more particular examination. They must fall with the priesthood, and to the means of accelerating that fall, I am now about to call your attention. This has been the main point of difference between us: this has made you hypocrites: this has made you denounce me, and to raise the cry throughout the radical ranks, of—"have nothing to do with Carlile!" Had you rightly followed, where I was going, five years ago, we should have heard something about reform by this time, and Joseph Swan and myself should not have had a fifth year's imprisonment.

It is well known, that the aristocracy of Europe were the first to become infidels to Christianity. What is called

Atheism, has been spreading among them for many centuries past, or ever since the revival of letters in the fifteenth century; but, though they discussed their infidelity in their own circles, but few of them have been honest enough to avow it to the world. They saw that priestcraft, that superstition, was the parent of ignorance to the multitude, and that ignorance in that multitude was essential to all aristocratical distinctions and modes of living. Seeing this, they cried up Christianity to the multitude; and now when many of that multitude are beginning to enquire into the truth of the matter, and to avow themselves infidels to Christianity, you find the aristocracy growing outrageous. Can there be a difficulty to discern the cause of all this? Cannot you yet see the utility of what I have been doing? You cannot carry Parliamentary Reform with such an aristocracy as exists in this country: you cannot shake the power of that aristocracy by any insidious means, it must be done by an open attack; and to attack the Priests is to attack the aristocracy at their weakest point. In fact it is attacking them at all points at once; for the ignorance arising from superstition is the strong hold of all the unjust distinctions, and of all the splendid idlers, in society. Many approve and applaud, but few see the magnitude of the task, I have in hand: and most of those who do see are either silent or hostile. The enemy sees it clearly enough. I know men in both Houses of Parliament, who, in their private circles, are avowed Atheists; yet, not one of them will open his mouth in my case, but to affect horror and to avow hostility! In their public discourses, they talk about God, Christianity, and Religion, as flippant as a priest in his pulpit! These men are aristocrats, and know, that, through the priests, I attack their unjust modes of living upon the public taxes. They feel, that they must stand or fall with Mother Church: so they cling fast to the skirts of the old hag. Some of them have confessed, that it would be a species of suicide to drop a word in my behalf.

I have now to shew you upon what ground I attack the Priests, upon what ground Christianity is assailable.

I assail them upon every ground that they can take. If they talk about the moral utility of Christianity; I shew them that its practical character, in all countries, throughout its history, is bad. If they refer me to the moral worth of the New Testament as a book, I shew them, by an analysis, that it exhibits more of immorality than morality. If they talk to me about Jesus Christ, as a Saviour for a

future life; I explain to them, that there is no future life, that shall be conscious of the present; that there is no such places in being as they call Heaven and Hell; and that, consequently, no such a being as Jesus Christ or Devil can be in existence. If they refer me to the long standing history of the tale; I go to its origin, shew it to be fabulous, and that antiquity does not convert a fable to truth. I can controvert all their positions, either physically or historically. If they seek a refuge in the Old Testament, the history and present condition of the Jews, or the pretended prophecies; I shew them the bad foundation of such a refuge, by shewing, that the Jews were not known in Asia Minor two thousand four hundred years ago; whilst, their sacred books pretend to place their residence as a people in that country a thousand years before we have any authentic history of them. Such a circumstance proclaims their first fourteen books to be fabulous. For my part, I never either conversed or corresponded with a Jew upon the subject, who did not avow his abomination of the superstition of his ancestors: and I have known many to make that avowal. I understand that the case is almost universal with them, at least, with the educated part; for, the uneducated are evidence of nothing, in any sect or party. If they talk to me about a God; I ask them, what they mean or refer to by the word. To this they can give me no answer; for no one man knows any thing further about *a God* than any other man; and let every man put the question to himself, whether he knows any thing about *God*; and he will be constrained to say, that *no one man is more of an Atheist than any other man*. We are all Atheists alike, when we examine the matter fairly, and rest upon our knowledge instead of our ignorance and superstition.

If, in any shape, I could perceive, that religion was of the least benefit, or productive of the least happiness, to society, I should be among the last to oppose it; but, after the most careful view and consideration, I perceive it to be productive of nothing, to the useful part of the community, but degradation and wretchedness. Even where it is cherished as a fancied consolation under disaster, it is a cherishing of the viper that bites. Death would not be feared, if death were understood. It is the horrible phantoms that are first associated with the idea of death, that make religion a consolation. Remove those phantoms, instruct and strengthen the mind, and death will not alarm, nor religion be needed as a consolation. This is what I am doing, and

thousands are the witnesses of my success: thousands of tongues are ready to proclaim that they do not fear death, nor need religion as a consolation. This matter is now so palpable, that the Christians are beginning to allow the possibility of men dying without avowing themselves to be Christians on their death beds. Death was never feared by any but superstitious men, who had received the erroneous impressions about evil spirits. Religion first invents the existence of phantoms to terrify, and then offers itself as a consolation and security against them: or it should be stated, that, Priests terrify you, that they may extract money, under the promise of becoming a safeguard. Their conduct is altogether a swindling, a raising of money under false pretences. And yet, we see them encouraged by the aristocracy, and year after year, new grants of money are heaped upon them. They are furnished with additional sums of the people's earnings, in the same ratio, as the people proclaim they do not need their assistance! New churches are built in the same ratio, as the people forsake the old ones! what can all this mean? That the aristocracy are alarmed, and hope by the dint of money to stimulate the Priests to new exertions, to add to their numbers, and to recover what they are evidently fast losing. But this can never be done: the hope is vain! Science is pervading every part of society, and almost every branch of science proclaims, that no religion can have a good foundation. Your Mechanics' Institutions, your every thing useful, proclaims that you would flourish better without than with the priests; and the purport of my invitation, of my address, is to stimulate you to make public proclamation of this fact. I am about to petition the Parliament, if I can get any person to present such a petition, that it pass a law to stay young men from further taking of Holy Orders, as a matter of humanity, that shall lessen the amount of disappointment, which must eventually occur to the priesthood, in finding it proved to a whole people, that it forms an unnecessary and injurious institution in the state. He must be a blind father, who prepares his son for Holy Orders, in the present day.

The numbers of the current volume of "The Republican" will explain to you the whole of the defects of religion. In commencing this address, I intended to recapitulate them; but my old enemy has come forth with new vigour, and I must leave you to battle him. I desire no better proof of the validity of my doctrines, than the manner in which the aristocrats and priests, unite to persecute me for promulgat-

ing them. I desire no better proof that mine is the right road to Parliamentary Reform, to Catholic Emancipation, and to all that the labouring part of the English, Scotch, and Irish, are calling for, than the fact, that the enemies to those things and those people, who have left all other persecutions to persecute me and those who are acting with me. And yet, all I ask, is—FREE DISCUSSION upon disputable matters! I invite you as men to act like men, to come forward in your several neighbourhoods and avow what you think upon these matters. If any of you have not begun to think, then, do so, for they most deeply interest you. I do not wish you to form public meetings, nor pot house meetings, nor any meetings of that kind; but, reason with yourselves and neighbours, make it a principal topic of your conversation, and do not fear to speak what you think. Not to speak what you think is a tacit support of all the oppressions that oppress you; of all the vices which surround and degrade you. Your failure, in calling for Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage, arose from the fact, that you cherished the very men and things in words, which you were seeking to undermine, and with your expressed approbation of their institutions, they defeated you. You were actually beaten in argument: for Mr. Canning most truly retorted upon you, *that you did not know what you were calling for; that what you asked would assuredly overthrow all that you avowed a desire to preserve.* In this argument, he was right; you were wrong in wishing or in saying you wished, to preserve those evils which must be abolished e'er Parliamentary Reform be obtained. JOIN WITH ME AND conquer that bad influence which CONSTITUTES A BAD PARLIAMENT. DO THIS, OR OWN YOURSELVES WILLING SLAVES TO THOSE WHO WILL TO BE YOUR TYRANTS.

RICHARD CARLILE.

THE FOLLOWING PETITION WAS PRESENTED,
WITH SOME PERTINENT OBSERVATIONS, TO
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE 13TH
INSTANT, BY MR. HUME.

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and
Ireland in Parliament assembled.*

The Petition of John Duncan Dawson,
of Beverly, in Yorkshire, and of others
the undersigned.

SHEWETH,

That your Petitioners seeing clearly that all difference in opinion means nothing but a difference in the knowledge of individuals, consider *that, a bad law*, which punishes persons for holding or promulgating any opinions; convinced, that all weak or bad opinions can be best corrected, and only effectually corrected, by free discussion, and by opposing to them the highest state of existing knowledge, which must embrace the best opinions.

That, though they cannot concur in the theological opinions of the late Thomas Paine, and are assured that the most learned men of the age do not concur in those opinions, yet, they are pained to see persons imprisoned, fined, and otherwise ill-treated, for promulgating such opinions, because the argument for the error of such opinions is by no means an argument for violently opposing those who may be ignorant and weak enough to hold them. If erroneous, as your Petitioners impute, they conceive, that the better way to have drawn off the people from holding to them would have been, by offering them, in a mild and peaceable manner, such as were superior, such as would bear every examination, which they assume not to be the case with those opinions for holding or publishing which persons have been of late so severely persecuted.

That your Petitioners take a still broader ground, and are ready to admit, that no man will persist in opposition to persecution, in promulgating opinions which he does not conceive to be correct; therefore, if incorrect, they cannot conceive how such a man can be justly punished for his ignorance, for that which is his misfortune and not his crime.

That your Petitioners are concerned in the assurance, that

such persecutions give weight to opinions that are otherwise without weight: that they lay the foundation of a presumption that the promulgators of such opinions are only persecuted because they cannot be answered, and that an importance is given to persons who suffer for such publications, which no other means or qualifications they might possess could confer: thus, increasing by prosecutions at law, that evil, by many fold, which it is their professed object to check. For the honour of science and literature, which are not mentioned without exultation in your honourable house, your Petitioners ask, that ill-founded opinions may not have weight given to them by prosecutions on the publishers.

Your Petitioners, therefore, most earnestly pray, that your honourable house will initiate some law, that shall encourage free discussion and protect the disputants about opinions from all penalties, so as to give the best their due weight, or so express its sense of the late prosecutions for the publication of opinions, as shall persuade from all further processes at law of that kind. And your Petitioners, &c.



Proclamation!

WHEREAS, IGNORANT AND BAD MEN IN POWER HAVE EVER CONSPIRED TO PREVENT OTHERS FROM KNOWING MORE THAN THEMSELVES, AND TO CHECK ALL INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT TENDS TO CHANGE SUCH OPINIONS AS THOSE UPON WHICH THEY HAVE INHERITED OR ACQUIRED POWER: AND WHEREAS, SUCH MEN HAVE EVER PERSECUTED SUCH OTHER MEN, AS HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THE HUMAN RACE GOING ON IN PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT: BE IT KNOWN TO ALL, THAT PROSECUTIONS HAVE BEEN RENEWED, AFTER MANY MONTHS CESSATION, FOR PUBLICATIONS WHICH QUESTION THE GOOD FOUNDATION

OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION; AND THAT, BETWEEN THE 7TH AND 15TH OF THE MONTH OF MAY INSTANT, THREE PERSONS WERE ARRESTED FROM THE SHOP, 84, FLEET STREET, LONDON. THIS IS, THEREFORE, TO GIVE NOTICE, THAT ALL PERSONS, WHO WILL PRESENT THEMSELVES TO SELL BOOKS IN THE SAID SHOP, FREE OF COST IN GETTING THERE, ARE DESIRED IMMEDIATELY TO FORWARD THEIR NAMES, THAT THEY MAY BE REGULARLY CALLED UPON, SO AS TO PREVENT THE STOPPAGE OF SALE IN THE SAID SHOP. IT IS MOST DISTINCTLY TO BE UNDERSTOOD, THAT A LOVE OF PROPAGATING THE PRINCIPLES, AND A SACRIFICE OF LIBERTY TO THAT END, AS FAR AS IT MAY BE REQUIRED, AND NOT GAIN, MUST BE THE MOTIVE TO CALL FORTH SUCH VOLUNTEERS: FOR, THOUGH R. CARLILE PLEDGES HIMSELF TO DO, WHAT HE HAS HITHERTO DONE, TO GIVE SUCH MEN THE BEST SUPPORT IN HIS POWER, SHOULD ANY GREAT NUMBER BE IMPRISONED, HE IS NOT SO SITUATED, AS TO PROPERTY OR PROSPECTS, AS TO BE ABLE TO PROMISE ANY PARTICULAR WEEKLY SUM: NOR DOES HE MAKE ANY PROMISE WHATEVER, BEYOND HIS DISPOSITION TO DO ALL THAT MAY BE IN HIS POWER TO DO. AS THE MATTER SEEMS TO BE AN EXPERIMENT ON THE PART OF LORD ELDON, ROBERT PEEL, AND Co., TO SEE HOW FAR THE OPPOSITION CAN BE CARRIED, AND WHETHER THE PROMISES TO COME FORWARD TO STAND PROSECUTIONS WILL BE REALIZED, ALL GOOD MEN ARE EXHORTED TO MAKE AND COMMUNICATE THEIR RESOLVE, AND TO HOLD THEMSELVES IN READINESS.

GOD SAVE THE KING!!!

Done at Dorchester Gaol, May 16, 1824. In the fifth year of the reign of his most gracious, most religious, and most tolerant Majesty, George the Fourth, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain and Ireland, King—Defender of the Faith, &c.!

Reasons for issuing the foregoing Proclamation, and for opposition to such prosecutions as those in question.

1st. Because, I have proved, indisputably, that, there can be no law, where upon to try matters of criticism upon the Christian, or any other, religion: for which, see, in No. 17, Vol. VIII., Republican, a paper, read to the Court of King's Bench, by Joseph William Trust. This paper proves, that I, and those who have been persecuted for acting with me, have never offended any law, to justify such prosecutions and persecutions as we have endured. Of all offence against the laws, I, therefore, feel an innocence.

2d. Because, I have proved, that, both the Old and New Testaments, or the books so called, are void of such historical foundation, as is essential to prove their truth, or that their pretensions are entitled to our respect. For proof of which, see the 1st and 7th Nos. of Vol. IX. of the Republican, and the volumes generally.

3d. Because, since I have grown sceptical on the matters concerning God, Gods, or Religion, impressed upon my mind in my youth, I have most sincerely, and most industriously, sought the truth, relating to such matters; and, in all my conversations or correspondences with clergymen, or laymen, I have found none so hardy as to say, that there is a personified God, or that God is a figure: when pressed to the question, one and all have confessed, that they have *no knowledge of any such a God*; therefore, if we have no knowledge of the figure of a God, we have no knowledge of any identity relating to the *word God*; and, it is, at least, a probable inference, in absence of all proof, that all mankind have been in error upon this subject, and that, no one has any moral power or justification to persecute, or to desire to controul, or to check the promulgation of, the opinions of another upon such a hidden matter; since, the most free discussion is yet required, to bring us to any proof, or truth, upon the matter of enquiry.

4th. Because, I have, at various times, places, and occasions, given proof, that morality, which is the definition and purpose of all practicable and useful human law, has no relation to the word *religion* or its ceremonies: morality, being a matter confined to a relation between man and man in society; and religion, a word, having no relation separate from man, as an individual, and his unknown creating power.

5th. Because, it has been lately implied, from observa-

tions made by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in the House of Commons, and by Chief Justice Abbott, in the Court of King's Bench, on the trial of Joseph William Trust, that no further prosecutions of the kind would take place; and, a cessation for several months, has guaranteed the propriety of the expectation; nor has any thing new occurred to warrant the re-commencement.

6th. Because, as right opinions, when advanced, will quickly triumph over those that are wrong, the absence of all moral opposition to the opinions which I promulgate, and desire to have freely discussed, is presumptive proof, that all the learning of the country cannot oppose my conclusions: were it practicable, it belies human nature to suppose, that any man, desirous of espousing opposite opinions, would be silent and leave to me the moral triumph undisputed.

7th and last. Because, in every act of mine, as a public writer or publisher, I have been seriously impressed with the conviction, that I have been and am the instrument of good to the present, and to future generations of mankind.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Dorchester Gaol, May 17, 1824.

TO MR. R. CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

SIR,
ALTHOUGH—

Giltspur Street Compter, May 17, 1824.

“The powers that be,” have my body confin’d,
The powers are not, which shall fetter my mind.

You, Sir, I presume, are by this time informed, through the medium of the press, of my unjust, and unlawful, imprisonment. Every rational man upon the hearing thereof would be ready to enquire, who I had robbed, who defrauded, whose wife or daughter have I injured; were I a drunkard, a disorderly character or a gamester? No; no man can lay any of those things to my charge. Can you guess, Sir? if you can, I am sure it would be more than Jesus Christ could have done: (for he did not know any thing about printed books) know then, Sir, I have been forced to prison by the humble followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, for selling a sixpenny printed pamphlet of the 17th No. of the Republican, Vol. 9. Agreeable to order, I went last Monday morn-

ing the 17th inst. and opened your Shop, 84, Fleet Street. Determined to keep it open until some re-inforcements arrived from the country, and to insure this, I thought it would be prudent to refrain from selling the works which had been so unlawfully prosecuted, viz. the "Age of Reason," "Palmer's Principles," and "Vision of Judgment." But, Sir, you must not suppose the holy saints could stand idle all the day, no, Sir, before two o'clock I had the honour of riding in a coach to Guildhall, with a man clothed with a little brief authority and dragged before the unbelievers; yes, Sir, I say the unbelievers. Do you think, Sir, those men who receive honour from men, John chap. v. ver. 44, and who are accumulating riches as fast as they can, believe that a rich man cannot enter heaven, laying up treasures on earth to weep and howl over, when those miseries shall come upon them. I often smile when I think upon that grand scene, which we are to see, as foretold by that holy apostle John, when the fowls of heaven shall be called to eat the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, great men, small men, horses and all: what, Sir, would holy Paul say were he alive in the present day? Why I am sure he would scold the holy saints now, as he did the holy saints in his own days. What, he would say, is it so, is there not a wise man among you, no not one, that shall be able to judge between his brethren; yea, I speak it to your shame, you who are ordained to judge angels, yet when you have a matter against another you go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints; for, Sir, if I am accounted an heretic, I ought not to be rejected until after the first and second admonition, and then Jesus says, it is only to be told to the church, Matt. ver. xviii. chap. 17. He does no where order them to persecute or prosecute others, he tells them it is they that shall, and must, be persecuted, and if they will not bear the cross, and that patiently too, they will not be found worthy to share with him in glory. So, Sir, you must conclude there can be neither saints or believers in the present day whatever, for they all seem to take thought for the morrow, what they shall eat and where-withal they shall be clothed, therefore to their shame be it spoken, they dragged me before the unbelievers; and you, Sir, may naturally suppose how those unbelievers would treat a poor man like me when they had got me in their clutches, (not having their loins girt about with truth and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of Peace) they looked angry at me, and told me I had sold a very wicked and blasphemous book, I pleaded ignorance of the contents of the book, as I had not read it and asked their honourable servant if I had not refused him those books which he had asked for, viz. the "Age of Reason," and "Palmer's Principles of Nature," he replied, yes, but I had promised him he should have them in a day or two, and that if this was such a wicked book they should have sent me word it was so, if they knew it before; they then told me

I should have looked to that before I sold it, I replied very few booksellers read all their books before they sold them, but requested him to read those very wicked passages which he said this book contained; he then very obligingly, read one as follows, "Almost all the characters spoken of in the Bible were very immoral men, as Noah, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Paul, a band of robbers, murderers, adulterers, drunkards, liars, impostors, and tyrants;" this in his opinion was a most wicked, prophane, and blasphemous libel, but I told him this was only his opinion, he said it must be the opinion of every man in this country who had accepted the religion of the holy scriptures, I replied it was not an accepted religion, it was a religion forced upon the people, and I had as much authority to believe the Mahometan religion, as this forced religion; he then began to preach something about here and hereafter: when I told him, though I was ignorant of the contents of the book before, but since he had read me that passage, I would maintain it was truth, and truth surely cannot be a libel, he pretended to be shocked, and very humanely ordered me to find bail, myself £100. and two sureties of £50. each. I then told him if it had been the Bible I had sold, he would have been more justified in those means, for a more wicked and blasphemous book was not published. I was then taken to Giltspur Street Compter, and am ready not only to suffer stripes and imprisonment, but even death for the cause of truth. Oh, Sir, what a horrid name has the name of Jesus been. What blood has been spilt, what millions of human beings have been massacred through that name, look back at the Crusades, St. Bartholomew, Smithfield, &c. Yet he said he was not come to destroy mens' lives, but to save them: pray, Sir, can you tell me whether the name of Mahomet or Jesus has been most injurious to society.

I trust, Sir, I shall always feel grateful for your manly, bold, and undaunted spirit, in publishing the immortal writings of Thomas Paine, whose writings shall stand when all those pompous palaces, those high walled gaols, those fornicating gospel shops shall fall, and like the fabric of a vision leave not a wreck behind. Yes, Sir, those writings shall endure for ever, world without end, Amen!!

You, Sir, by persevering in publishing those works have been the means of bringing me out of darkness into light; you have removed the scum and filth of ignorance and superstition, and discovered to me reason and truth. Go on, Mighty Sir, in the greatness of thy strength, destroy those thine enemies, not like the Christians with fire and sword, but with truth and reason. Collect all thy forces, we have only just begun, we have now prepared the way, sound the horn, the walls totter, the enemy trembles—they are exerting all their force, their strength, to make one more grand effort, and, Sampson-like, revenge and murder bury in the

ruins all they can, fall to rise no more. Now is the time to try the spirits of men.

Liberty and Free Discussion,
To be or not to be is now the question.

I would write more but time presses.

Believe me, Sir, your obedient Servant,

JOHN CLARK.

CASE OF JOSEPH SWAN.

ON Tuesday, the 11th instant, the case of this brave man was discussed in the House of Commons, on the presentation of a petition by Mr. Williams, the member for Lincoln. As it is a case that cannot be too widely circulated and considered, I shall copy the report of the discussion from the Morning Chronicle, with the petition.

Mr. J. Williams said he rose to present a Petition from an individual of the name of Joseph Swan, who was, he believed, the solitary remaining prisoner of those persons who were incarcerated and prosecuted in the year 1819. It was, though it had escaped his recollection, his lot to have prosecuted that individual. From the time that had elapsed, it was not to be wondered at that the circumstance had escaped his recollection. It appeared from the Petition, that Mr. Swan had been a mechanic and artizan, residing at Macclesfield, in the county of Chester. In consequence of the very great distress, notorious to every man who heard him, that at that period prevailed throughout the whole of the manufacturing districts, the Petitioner was compelled by necessity to change his means of exertion, and he became a vender of books and pamphlets. He was apprehended in the month of August, 1819, on a charge of selling blasphemous publications, and was detained in close custody till the October following, a period of eight weeks. Having been then discharged upon bail, he was a second time apprehended, on the 29th of December following, and detained at Middlewich to the January following. The Petitioner stated, that during that latter period, he was chained with other prisoners. Without resting on the allegations of the Petitioner, he (Mr. Williams,) reflecting on the temper of those times, believed there was reason to fear that persons thus circumstanced were exposed

to the extreme of rigour and violence. He was at length tried and convicted on three indictments—two for blasphemy, and the third for attending a Meeting at Macclesfield. For the purpose of convening that Meeting he had signed the Requisition; but he stated positively that at the said Meeting he never uttered a word. Whatever that was seditious was expressed through the medium of a person of the name of Buckly, who was also indicted with the Petitioner. And yet, strange to say, that man Buckley—the principal in the proceedings of that Meeting, who was “the very head and front” of the imputed offence—though indicted, was never brought to trial to that hour, although at sundry times he had been subsequently seen at large at, and in the vicinity of, Macclesfield. It was impossible to explain how it was that the principal offender should be at large, and the accessory or the instrument should be thus rigorously punished. It was at least undeniable, that a punishment, which for the three charges, comprehended an imprisonment of four years and three quarters, was a punishment carried to as great extent of severity as perhaps was exemplified in the history of political offences. For his part, though engaged in the prosecution, he (Mr. Williams) had nothing to do with the originating of the proceedings, and was not at all responsible for the rigour or extent of the punishment (hear, hear, hear!), the sum and quantum of which would speak for itself. Indeed when one considered its duration, it was impossible not to feel that it was marked with severity. At all events there was, under existing circumstances sufficient to induce his Majesty's Government to reconsider its continuance and duration. Could it be forgotten that at that moment, very generally throughout the country, and particularly in those districts, a series of distress and pressure prevailed, which every liberal minded man would see. Those who suffered under it would, however mistaken, impute, not to the inflictions of fortune, but to the errors of Government. The Right Hon. Secretary for the Home Department (Mr. Peel) did, no doubt, feel that that season of suffering and discontent had passed away, and therefore he (Mr. Williams) trusted, that he had only to remind him that the petitioner was the solitary *remnant* of those political offenders of that season now lingering in a prison [hear, hear!]. It could not be forgotten either by that House, as it was not by the petitioning prisoner, that when the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer made his financial exposition in the early part of the Session, he congratulated both Parliament and the country on the acknowledged feelings of a grateful people, and on the restoration of order, subordination, and constitutional obedience. He trusted that every other member of the Government embraced those wise and liberal and generous feelings; and that they felt with the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that those

acts of coercion, which temporary suffering and discontent produced, were, on the part of the Government and Legislature, the results of a hard and painful necessity. If such punishments were the remedies for particular disorders, was it wise, was it prudent, was it humane to continue them, when those disorders which were the cause had happily disappeared? He put it to his Majesty's Government to take into their consideration all the circumstances of the Petitioner's case. A few months longer, and his imprisonment would be brought to a close, with those feelings in the public mind which usually accompanied excessive and disproportionate punishment, namely a turning away of all disapprobation of the offence, and the conversion of a culprit into a martyr. The Petitioner was the only remaining individual of those whom, in the temperate language of the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, hard necessity had induced his Majesty's Government to cast into captivity; and he appealed to their good feeling, now that that hard necessity was over, as to the humanity of liberating him.

Mr. James observed, that for the severe punishment which this individual had experienced, and which arose out of the political agitations of 1819, the Magistrates were deeply responsible. It was unwarrantable, and could with difficulty be paralleled in the history of political persecution, especially under "an unpaid Magistracy." The discretion which had been used on this occasion was truly what had been very justly called "a fiend discretion." The Petitioner was innocent of all criminal acts; he merely attended a Public Meeting, where he did not utter a syllable; but a Mr. Buckley made what was called an inflammatory speech. To shew that the Magistrates of the district were ashamed of what had been done, they had for twelve months been inducing the gaoler to endeavour to persuade Swan to petition for a remission of his sentence. He had not thought proper to comply with their wish, and was prepared to suffer the extent of his punishment, in order to afford a specimen of the severity with which an individual might be treated under a Government, which was "the envy of surrounding nations, and the admiration of the world." Who after such an example could stand up in that House, and elsewhere, and talk of the boasted liberty of Englishmen?

Mr. Secretary Peel observed, that the Honourable and Learned Gentleman who presented the Petition had mentioned the subject to him only yesterday, when he (Mr. Peel) had observed, that as it related to circumstances which occurred four years ago, two years before he was in office, he could of course have no knowledge respecting it; that therefore, if the Honourable and Learned Gentleman presented the Petition this day, he (Mr. Peel) could not obtain any information as to those circumstances; but

that if it pleased the Honourable and Learned Gentleman to postpone presenting the Petition, he (Mr. Peel) would inquire, and, from the character of the Magistrates, was persuaded that he should obtain every necessary explanation. As the matter stood, the allegations in the Petition were merely those of the Petitioner himself; and it was singular, that nearly four years had elapsed before he had made any such complaint. With respect to the severity of the punishment that had been inflicted in this case, he begged to say a few words. Of course, all appeals to Parliament against the exercise of the prerogative of the Crown, in withholding mercy from offenders, were appeals against the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whose duty it was to advise the Crown in such matters. Now he readily allowed that he had not advised his Majesty to remit the punishment of the individual in question, nor was it his intention so to advise his Majesty. No fine had been inflicted on the petitioner. On finding securities for his good behaviour, he would be liberated at the expiration of the term to which he had been sentenced by the law, and it was not his intention to advise his Majesty to shorten that term. The Honourable and Learned Gentleman needed not have defended himself from any imputed inconsistency in having presented this petition, although he had been counsel in the prosecution of the petitioner. In the latter capacity, the Honourable and Learned Gentleman had discharged his duty ably and temperately, and had obtained a verdict against the petitioner: but there was certainly no impropriety whatever in his now presenting a petition from the same individual, praying for the interference of the House in his behalf. The Petitioner had been tried on five indictments, one for blasphemous, and two seditious, libels; one for a seditious conspiracy, and the other for blasphemy. On three of those indictments he had been convicted, he had been convicted of publishing a blasphemous libel and a seditious libel, and had also been convicted of sedition. He had not erred without sufficient notice and warning of the probable consequences of his offence; but he was one of many who were at that time deeply engaged in the infamous traffic in seditious and blasphemous publications. His father resided at Stockport and sold such publications, and his son was sent to Macclesfield for the same purpose. He had instigated and compelled his wife to embark in the same traffic. On the whole, therefore, although four years was an unusual extent of imprisonment, yet, after the warning which the Petitioner had received, and after all the circumstances of the case, he (Mr. Peel) did not conceive that it was too severe an infliction. As to the charge of sedition, he would refer to the Honourable and learned Gentleman's own address to the Jury by whom the Petitioner was tried, in which the Honourable and Learned Gentleman, after admitting that freedom of discussion was one of the first

rights of Englishmen, maintained that the publication on which the prisoner was charged was calculated "to stir the people up to a contempt of his Majesty's Government." The Honourable and learned Gentleman had also observed, that the work spoke too of a convention—a term borrowed from the worst times of the French Revolution. It ought also not to be forgotten, that the conduct of the Petitioner while in the Court had been contemptuous and offensive in the extreme. He insulted the Bench, and held up his white hat, which was at that time the symbol of the party by whom the tranquillity of the country was menaced. All these circumstances combined to shew the impropriety of extending mercy to such an individual. As to the observations in the speech of his Right Honourable Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting the returning prosperity of the country, that had no reference to the very different circumstances of 1819—circumstances of which the petitioner had availed himself to incite the people, and to carry on his revolutionary designs. The Honourable Member for Carlisle had said, that if this person were not released, this country would in vain be called the land of freedom. Now really he (Mr. Peel) was at a loss to conceive how, allowing the law to take its course with respect to any individual who had violated it, was prejudicial to the freedom of others. On three distinct charges the Jury, by whom this person had been tried, had expressed their conviction of his guilt. When he considered all these things; when he considered the nature of the crime which the petitioner had committed, the circumstances of the period at which it had been committed, and the total absence of all acknowledgment of offence on the part of the culprit, he certainly did not feel that he should be warranted in recommending such a person to his Majesty for a remission of any part of his sentence; and notwithstanding what had been said in the course of the present evening, it was not his intention to do so.

Mr. Hume observed, that the petitioner did not ask for mercy. That he was above doing. What he complained of was the injustice of his sentence. It was, indeed, such a sentence as was seldom witnessed in this country. A blasphemous libel! What was a blasphemous libel? Was that to be determined by the opinion of the Magistracy of the County of Lancaster? Up to the present moment, the petitioner knew nothing of the contents of the work, which he was charged with publishing. Under such circumstances, even to prosecute him was an act of cruelty. The Right Honourable Gentleman was mistaken in saying that the petitioner excited the people to sedition and insurrection. He had never opened his mouth. Under such circumstances, he (Mr. Hume) repeated, that punishment inflicted upon the petitioner was unprecedented. To add to its severity, he had, in the first instance, been confined in one of the condemned cells, and fed on bread

and water, and then removed to the felons' ward, clothed in a felon's dress, and denied the use of pen and ink, and the sight of his wife, who was in a dangerous state of health. There was nothing in the circumstances of the prisoner's case which warranted such barbarous proceedings. Nor was it just that such individuals as Trafford Trafford should sit in judgment on a case in which they had themselves taken so active a part. Notwithstanding the eulogiums from time to time bestowed on "the unpaid Magistracy" of the country, it appeared to him to be extremely inexpedient to give them the power of imprisonment to such an extent as in the present instance. He regretted extremely that the Right Honourable Gentleman, or his predecessor in office, had not long ago taken all these circumstances into consideration, and advised the King to put an end to the petitioner's imprisonment. Now, whenever he came out of prison, he would come out a persecuted individual.

Mr. Sykes expressed his hope that at least, considering the severity of the sentence in other respects, the petitioner would not be called upon for his sureties.

After a short explanation from Mr. Secretary Peel, the Petition was brought up, and read as follows:—

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled, the humble Petition of Joseph Swan now a prisoner in Chester Castle,

"Sheweth—That in the year 1819 your petitioner resided at Macclesfield, and carried on a small trade in books and pamphlets. That your petitioner was arrested on the 21st August, 1819, and taken to Middlewich, whence, at the Session, he was removed to Knutsford, and charged (as he believes) upon three indictments of which he knew nothing till that moment; two of these indictments were for alleged libels contained in some of the books which your petitioner, in the course of his business, had sold; and the other indictment was for being present at a public meeting, held at Macclesfield on the 31st July, 1819; your petitioner traversed, and was liberated on bail, after being kept in prison for eight weeks, during which time bail had been frequently offered for him and refused.

"That your Petitioner, with his wife, then in an advanced state of pregnancy, was again arrested on the 28th December, 1819, and confined at Macclesfield till the 1st January, 1820, when he was removed, in irons, to Middlewich, and on the following night your petitioner's wife was liberated.

"That, on the 10th January, 1820, your petitioner was dragged through the public road, linked to a chain, with a number of other prisoners, to Chester, a distance of about twenty miles; and on the 12th he was taken into Court, but instead of being tried on the indictments, for which he had traversed at the Knutsford Ses-

sions, and on which he was prepared to defend himself, two other indictments were exhibited, one, for blasphemy, and the other for sedition. On these, your petitioner was that day tried, and convicted; but to the present moment he has no knowledge of what the libels are, except the imperfect knowledge he was able to obtain from the indistinct reading of them in Court, on his trial. Your petitioner had never previously read them, and he was then, and still remains, entirely ignorant of the other contents, and even of the titles of the pamphlets from which they were selected. That on the same day your petitioner was tried with five others for being present at a meeting held at Macclesfield on the 31st July, 1819, for the purpose of taking "into consideration," as is stated in the requisition by which it was convened, "the most steady and proper means to be pursued for reforming the representation of the country."—That on this trial it was proved by the witnesses for the prosecution, that, though your petitioner had signed the requisition for the meeting, yet that he did not say a word, nor in any manner, interfere to influence its proceedings, and that the meeting itself was quite orderly and peaceable. The whole case for the prosecution rested entirely on expressions which were attributed by some of the witnesses to a person named William Buckley, who was upon the hustings, but who was not one of the persons by whom the meeting had been convened. All the observations, which the Counsel for the prosecution addressed to the Jury, and the inferences he drew against the meeting, were founded expressly on what Buckley was stated to have said. What he said was the subject of all the evidence, and was the point alone on which the Chairman, Trafford Trafford, Esq., dwelt, in his charge to the Jury, inculcating your petitioner and the other defendants, whose individual conduct had been unobjectionable, by strongly pressing upon the Jury, "that what fell from Buckley, in the course of the meeting, was equally applicable to the whole of the defendants;" and yet, your petitioner assures your Honourable House, that Buckley himself, though included in the indictment, has never been tried, nor otherwise brought to any account for his conduct on this occasion, though, as your petitioner is credibly informed and believes, the said William Buckley now is, and has been, with scarcely any exception, from the time of your petitioner's trial, openly residing in Stockport and Macclesfield, to both the inhabitants and the police of which towns he is well known.

"That your petitioner was convicted also on the charge arising out of his connection with this meeting, and on the following morning he was sentenced by Trafford Trafford, Esq. to be imprisoned two years for one libel, half a year for the other, and two years more for attending the meeting, making a term of four years and a half, besides the ten weeks of imprisonment and suffering which he had previously endured, and all this for having sold, in

the course of his business, libels which he had never read, and attended a meeting lawfully convened for a lawful purpose, and admitted to have been peaceable, at which he never spoke.

“ That for the first week of his imprisonment, your petitioner was confined in one of the condemned cells, and fed on bread and water; and that afterwards he was placed in the felons’ ward, compelled to wear a felon’s dress—denied pen, ink, and paper, and so rigorously excluded from intercourse out of the prison, as not to be allowed to receive any intelligence even of his wife, then in a critical and to him interesting and anxious state, until the end of March. This severity Mr. Hudson, the gaoler, informed your petitioner, was inflicted by the peremptory order of the Magistrates. Subsequently, your petitioner has been treated with more humanity; partly, he believes, because it was found that his bodily health, and even his mind, was severely affected by his sufferings.

“ That your petitioner having nearly completed a term of imprisonment, exceeding, as he believes, that to which any other individual in modern times has been subjected for political offences, marked by severity as the punishments for such offences usually are, and feeling conscious that in his own case the punishment he has endured bears no proportion to his imputed delinquency, he humbly prays your Honourable House to take his case into consideration, and your petitioner will ever pray, &c. &c.”

On moving that the petition do lie on the table—

Mr. Williams allowed that his Majesty’s Ministers had not had time since he mentioned the circumstance to the Right Honourable Gentleman to inquire into the truth of the allegations of the petition. Although the petitioner had not condescended to ask any thing as a favour, he did hope that Government would do a graceful act, and advise the remission of any further punishment.

The petition was then ordered to be printed.

OBSERVATIONS.

THE punishment suffered by Swan has been a punishment inflicted altogether for good behaviour. The man was honest, and would not suppress nor compromise his sense of right, to gratify a few aristocratical villains. It is idle to suppose, that Swan petitioned for the purpose of abridging his term of imprisonment. He had but two months to fill out

from the day on which the petition was presented ; and, in fact, the petition does not hint a word of the kind. The object was to make his case known, and why the M. P.'s said any thing about his liberation, I am at a loss to conceive ; though it is not to be expected that they should proceed upon ordinary rules. After a man has been sentenced to four years and a half imprisonment, for doing no more than every honest man might have conscientiously done, for doing no injury to any one human being, it would be an aggravation of the sentence to offer to abridge it by two months. No, Joseph Swan neither asked nor wanted any thing of this kind. It would be a species of deprivation of his worth to shorten his imprisonment by two months. Let him fill out the infamous sentence of Trafford Trafford : let his friends be ready with the necessary sureties, and open a subscription that shall furnish him with a sum to put him on in some business, that may make him, his injured wife and children, comfortable hereafter. This is what should be done, and the least that should be done, for him. I engage to say, that he looks for no more ; nor for that, if there be a man to say he is not worth it. For my part, I had rather fill out seven years imprisonment than ask the sympathy or mercy of the bigotted and cold-blooded Robert Peel, or of any man. I rather think, that an avowal of determination on my part, to do every thing on my liberation that I am now doing or have done, was communicated to him, before the prosecutions of the shopmen were renewed, after so many months cessation. I HEREBY DECLARE, THAT I NEVER WILL PROMISE, NOR COMPROMISE, ANY THING, TO, OR WITH MY PERSECUTORS.

Admitting for the sake of argument, that mine were convictions for so many real offences, that I had done some persons some great injury ; the law, in imposing a fine, means to say, that a man shall lose so much of his property for his offence. I was fined, no matter for the sum, or whether I had it or not ; and those who fined immediately laid their hands on all that I had as property, took it all away ; came two years after, took away all that I had again accumu-

lated; and still have the modesty to tell me, that my seized property is no property to them the seizers. If it were no property, I ought not to have been fined, for I had no other property, and that the Judges must have known. If it were no property when seized, they did wrong to seize; for I could have converted it to a property that would have covered my fines, when I had thought proper to pay them. It was either wrong to fine, wrong to seize for that fine, or wrong to continue me a prisoner in consequence of that fine and seizure; but, in my judgment, it was wrong, wicked, and cruel at every point.

I have left Swan's case for my own; but I feel that they are interwoven, and I could hardly desire liberty or redress without seeing him obtain the same before me. We have both filled a four years and a half imprisonment. He will be liberated in July; but for myself, I have no prospect of liberation until some change in the Government of the country takes place. I will accept it upon no terms, but a continuance of what I am now engaged in doing—*the overthrow of superstition, or efforts to that effect*. Free discussion is all I ask. I have no particular desire to see any thing done by physical force, if it can be done without; for, I am fully sensible, that civil war, and all other war, carries nothing but desolation and misery in its train. If any man can prove me to be in error, or not acting for the public good, at any point of my conduct, *I will recede from that point*. More I cannot honestly say, more I will not yield, less I will not act upon.

But a subscription to put Swan into business is the right thing for present consideration. The man does not aspire to any thing high. About a hundred pounds or a little more will do, and I feel that I owe him five of them.

RICHARD CARLILE.

Dorchester Gaol, May 14, 1824.

TO COUNTRY AGENTS, AND TO ALL FRIENDS.

THE battle of IGNORANCE against KNOWLEDGE, SUPERSTITION against REASON, BRUTE FORCE against MORAL POWER, VICE against VIRTUE, DISHONESTY against HONESTY, TYRANNY against LIBERTY, is again raging, and the seat of warfare is at 84, Fleet Street. Rush ye friends of *knowledge, reason, moral power, virtue, honesty, and liberty* to the field of battle and support your cause. As far as circumstances will admit, every possible attention shall be paid to agents, and to friends as correspondents; but it is desired, that nothing that may happen, be construed to disappointment or inattention. All friends who may be indebted to agents are desired to assist in enabling such agents to remit to the greatest possible amount of their balances, as no orders can be attended to under existing circumstances which may require an outlay of cash for those who keep balances, or at least for those whose balances are considered too heavy. We shall be pressed on all sides for money. An effort was made on the 18th instant to seize for taxes but it was defeated. As far as in our power lies, we will comply with existing laws; and for the prevention of the sale of useful books we know there is no law; nor is it possible to make a law of the kind, other than by previous Censorship. Up to our last sheet going to Press five persons have been arrested since the 7th instant.

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